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09 February 2000

To the Institute of Medicine

The Committee to Assess the Science base for Tobacco Harm Reduction

I am very pleased to see that the Institute of Medicine has formed a committee to investigate the scientific bases for the reduction of tobacco related harm. This is, in my mind, an extremely important task and I am honoured to be asked to contribute. The reason that I think it is so important comes from my basic belief that I think nicotine is here to stay. This belief has grown over my last 30 years of clinical and scientific work in the tobacco and nicotine area (CV enclosed). It is difficult enough to eliminate illegal drugs and tobacco/nicotine that has such widespread and long use throughout the world that it will be extremely difficult to eradicate. Tobacco smoking seems to be the ideal target for a harm reduction approach since with this substance - nicotine - it is not the drug itself that causes the significant harm.

I will concentrate my contribution around discussing some of what I think are the most relevant studies on the effects, particularly safety, of nicotine, and then focus on what probably is the best example of a harm reduction approach so far, i.e. snus use in Sweden. Sweden has both the lowest smoking prevalence and tobacco related mortality among the developed countries. My discussions will not be backed up by a complete reference bibliography. Rather I will enclose those that I think are the key references for my particular views.

Sincerely,



Karl Fagerström, Ph.D.

PM3001181108